THE CONNOISSEUR.

By Mr. *TOWN*,

CRITIC and CENSOR-GENERAL.

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— — — — — — — *Vitæ*
Percipit humanos odium, luciſque videndæ,
Ut ſibi conſciſcant mœrenti pectore lethum.

LUCRET.

THE laſt ſeſſions deprived us of the only ſurviving member of a Society, which (during its ſhort exiſtence) was equal both in principles and practice to the *Mohocks* and *Hell Fire Club* of tremendous memory. This Society was compoſed of a few broken gameſters and deſperate young rakes, who threw the ſmall remains of their bankrupt fortunes into one common ſtock, and thence aſſumed the name of the Laſt Guinea Club. A ſhort life and a merry one was their favourite maxim; and they determined, when their finances ſhould be quite exhauſted, to die as they had lived, like gentlemen. Some of their members had the good luck to get a reprieve by a good run at cards, and others by ſnapping up a rich heireſs or a dowager; while the reſt,

who were not cut off in the natural way by duels or the gallows, very reſolutely made their *quietus* with laudanum or the piſtol. The laſt that remained of this Society had very calmly prepared for his own execution: he had cocked his piſtol, deliberately placed the muzzle of it to his temple, and was juſt going to pull the trigger, when he bethought himſelf that he could employ it to better purpoſe on *Hounſlow Heath*. This brave man, however, had but a very ſhort reſpite, and was obliged to ſuffer the ignominy of going out of the world in the vulgar way by a halter.

THE enemies of play will perhaps conſider thoſe gentlemen, who boldly ſtake their whole fortunes at the gaming-table, in the ſame view with theſe deſperadoes; and they may even go ſo far as to regard the polite and honourable aſſembly at *White*'s as a kind of Laſt Guinea Club. Nothing, they will ſay, is ſo fluctuating as the property of a gameſter, who (when luck runs againſt him) throws away whole acres at every caſt of the dice, and whoſe houſes are as unſure a poſſeſſion, as if they were built with cards. Many, indeed, have been reduced to their laſt guinea at this genteel gaming-houſe: but the moſt inveterate enemies to *White*'s muſt allow that it is but now and then, that a gameſter of quality, who looks upon it as a toſs-up whether there is another world, takes his chance, and diſpatches himſelf, when the odds are againſt him in this.

BUT however free the gentlemen of *White*'s may be from any imputation of this kind, it muſt be confeſſed that Suicide begins to prevail ſo generally, that it is the moſt gallant exploit, by which our modern heroes chuſe to ſignalize themſelves; and in this, indeed, they behave with uncommon proweſs. From the days of *Plato* down to theſe a Suicide has always been compared to a ſoldier on guard deſerting his poſt; but I ſhould rather conſider a ſet of theſe deſperate men, who ruſh on certain death, as a body of troops ſent out on the Forlorn Hope. They meet every face of death, however horrible, with the utmoſt reſolution: ſome blow their brains out with a piſtol; ſome expire

expire like *Socrates*, by poiſons; ſome fall, like *Cato*, on the point of their own ſwords; and others who have lived like *Nero*, affect to die like *Seneca*, and bleed to death. The moſt exalted geniuſſes I ever remember to have heard of, were a party of reduced gameſters, who bravely reſolved to pledge each other in a bowl of laudanum. I was alſo lately informed of a gentleman, who went among his uſual companions at the gaming-table the day before he made away with himſelf, and coolly queſtioned them, which they thought the eaſieſt and genteeleſt method of going out of the world: for there is as much difference between a mean perſon and a man of quality in their manner of deſtroying themſelves, as in their manner of living. The poor ſneaking wretch, ſtarving in a garret, tucks himſelf up in his liſt garters; a ſecond, croſt in love, drowns himſelf, like a blind puppy, in *Roſamond's Pond*; and a third cuts his throat with his own razor. But the man of faſhion almoſt always dies by a piſtol; and even the cobler of any ſpirit goes off by a doſe or two extraordinary of gin.

But this falſe ſpirit of courage, however noble it may appear to the deſperate and abandoned, in reality amounts to no more than the reſolution of the highwayman, who ſhoots himſelf with his own piſtol, when he finds it impoſſible to avoid being taken. All poſſible means therefore ſhould be deviſed to extirpate ſuch abſurd bravery, and to make it appear every way horrible, odious, contemptible, and ridiculous. From reading the public prints a foreigner might be naturally led to imagine, that we are the moſt lunatic people in the whole world. Almoſt every day informs us, that the coroner's inqueſt has ſat on the body of ſome miſerable Suicide, and brought in their verdict *Lunacy*; but it is very well known that the inquiry has not been made into the ſtate of mind of the deceaſed, but into his fortune and family. The law has indeed provided, that the deliberate Self-Murderer ſhould be treated like a brute, and denied the rites of burial: but among hundreds of *lunatics by purchaſe*, I never knew this ſentence executed but on one poor cobler who hanged himſelf in his own ſtall. A pennyleſs poor dog who

who has not left enough to defray the funeral charges, may perhaps be excluded the church-yard; but Self-murder by a piſtol genteely mounted, or the *Paris*-hilted ſword qualifies the polite owner for a *ſudden death*, and entitles him to a pompous burial, and a monument ſetting forth his virtues in *Weſtminſter Abbey*. Every man in his ſober ſenſes muſt wiſh that the moſt ſevere laws that could poſſibly be contrived were enacted againſt Suicides. This ſhocking bravado never did (and I am confident never will) prevail among the more delicate and tender ſex in our own nation: tho' hiſtory informs us that the *Roman* Ladies were once ſo infatuated as to throw off the ſoftneſs of their nature, and commit violence on themſelves, 'till their madneſs was curbed by expoſing their naked bodies in the public ſtreets. This, I think, would afford a hint for fixing the like marks of ignominy on our Male-Suicides, and I would have every lower wretch of this ſort dragged at the cart's tail, and afterwards be hung in chains at his own door, or have his quarters put up *in terrorem* in the moſt public places as a rebel to his Maker. But that the Suicide of quality might be treated with more reſpect, he ſhould be indulged in having his wounded corpſe and ſhattered brains lay (as it were) in ſtate for ſome days, of which dreadful ſpectacle we may conceive the horror from the following picture drawn by *Dryden*.

> *The* SLAYER OF HIMSELF *too ſaw I there:*
> *The gore congealed was clotted in his hair:*
> *With eyes half-cloſed, and mouth wide ope he lay,*
> *And grim, as when he breathed his ſullen ſoul away.*
>
> DRYDEN'S FABLES.

THE common murderer has his ſkeleton preſerved at *Surgeon's Hall* in order to deter others from being guilty of his crimes; and I think it would not be improper to have a charnel-houſe ſet apart to receive the bones of theſe more unnatural Self-Murderers, in which monuments ſhould be erected giving an account of their deaths, and adorned with the glorious enſigns of their raſhneſs, the rope, the knife, the ſword or the piſtol.

THE

THE cauſe of theſe frequent Self-murders among us has been generally imputed to the peculiar temperature of our climate. Thus a dull day is looked upon as a natural order of execution, and *Engliſhmen* muſt neceſſarily ſhoot, hang, and drown themſelves in *November*. That our ſpirits are in ſome meaſure influenced by the air cannot be denied, but we are not ſuch meer Barometers as to be driven to deſpair and death by the ſmall degree of gloom that our winter brings with it. If we have not ſo much ſunſhine as ſome countries in the world, we have infinitely more than many others, and I do not hear that men diſpatch themſelves by dozens in *Ruſſia* or *Sweden*, or that they are unable to keep up their ſpirits even in the total darkneſs of *Greenland*. Our climate exempts us from many diſeaſes to which other more ſouthern nations are naturally ſubject, and I can never be perſuaded that being born near the North-pole is a phyſical cauſe for Self-Murder.

DESPAIR indeed is the natural cauſe of theſe ſhocking actions; but this is commonly deſpair brought on by wilful extravagance and debauchery. Theſe firſt involve men in difficulties, and then death at once delivers them of their lives and their cares. For my part, when I ſee a young profligate wantonly ſquandering his fortune in bagnios or at the gaming table, I cannot help looking on him as haſtening his own death, and in a manner digging his own grave. As he is at laſt induced to kill himſelf by motives ariſing from his vices, I conſider him as dying of ſome diſeaſe which thoſe vices naturally produce. If his extravagance has been chiefly in luxurious eating and drinking, I imagine him poiſoned by his wines, or ſurfeited by a favourite diſh; and if he has thrown away his eſtate in bawdy houſes, I conclude him deſtroyed by rottenneſs and filthy diſeaſes.

ANOTHER principal cauſe of the frequency of Suicide is the noble ſpirit of Freethinking which has diffuſed itſelf among all ranks of people. The libertine of faſhion has too refined a taſte to trouble himſelf at all about a ſoul or an hereafter: but the vulgar infidel is at wonderful pains to get

rid of his bible, and labours to perſuade himſelf out of his religion. For this purpoſe he attends conſtantly at the diſputant ſocieties, where he hears a great deal about free will, free agency, and predeſtination, 'till at length he is convinced that man is at liberty to do as he pleaſes, lays his misfortunes to the charge of providence, and comforts himſelf that he was inevitably deſtined to be tyed up in his own garters. The courage of theſe heroes proceeds from the ſame principles whether they fall by their own hands, or thoſe of *Jack Ketch*: The Suicide of whatever rank looks death in the face without ſhrinking; as the gallant rogue affects an eaſy unconcern under *Tyburn*, throws away the pſalm-book, bids the cart drive off with an oath, and ſwings like a gentleman.

If this madneſs ſhould continue to grow more and more epidemical, it will be expedient to have a Bill of Suicide, diſtinct from the common bill of mortality, brought in yearly, in which ſhould be ſet down the number of Suicides, their methods of deſtroying themſelves, and the likely cauſes of their doing ſo. In this, I believe, we ſhould find but few martyrs to the weather, but their deaths would commonly be imputed to deſpair, produced by ſome cauſes ſimilar to the following. In the little ſketch of a Bill of Suicide underneath, I have left blanks for the date of the year, as well as for the number of Self-Murderers, their manner of dying, &c. which would naturally be filled up by the proper perſons if ever this ſcheme ſhould be put in execution.

Bill of SUICIDE *for the Year* ——

Of Newmarket Races —— ——
Of Kept Miſtreſſes —— —— ——
Of Electioneering —— —— ——
Of Lotteries —— —— —— ——
Of French Claret, French Lace, French Cooks, and French Diſeaſe —
Of WHITE'S. —— —— ——
Of Chineſe Temples, &c. ——
Of a Country Seat — —— ——
Of a Town Houſe — —— ——
Of Fortune Hunting — ——
Of a Tour thro' France and Italy —
Of Lord Bolinbroke ——
Of the Robin Hood Society ——
Of an Equipage —— ——
Of a Dog-Kennel —— ——
Of Covent Garden —— ——
Of Plays, Operas, Concerts, Maſquerades, Routes, Drums, &c.
Of Keeping the Beſt Company ——

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